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BATMAN
IN 24 HOURS, I WILL MURDER THE BATMAN--
...AND KILLER CROC WILL BECOME GOTHAM'S NEW KING OF CRIME!!
HANNIGAN + GIORDANO

GERRY CONWAY WRITER ✦ DAN JURGENS ✦ DICK GIORDANO ARTISTS ✦ BEN ODA - LETTERER ADRIENNE ROY - COLORIST ✦ LEN WEIN EDITOR

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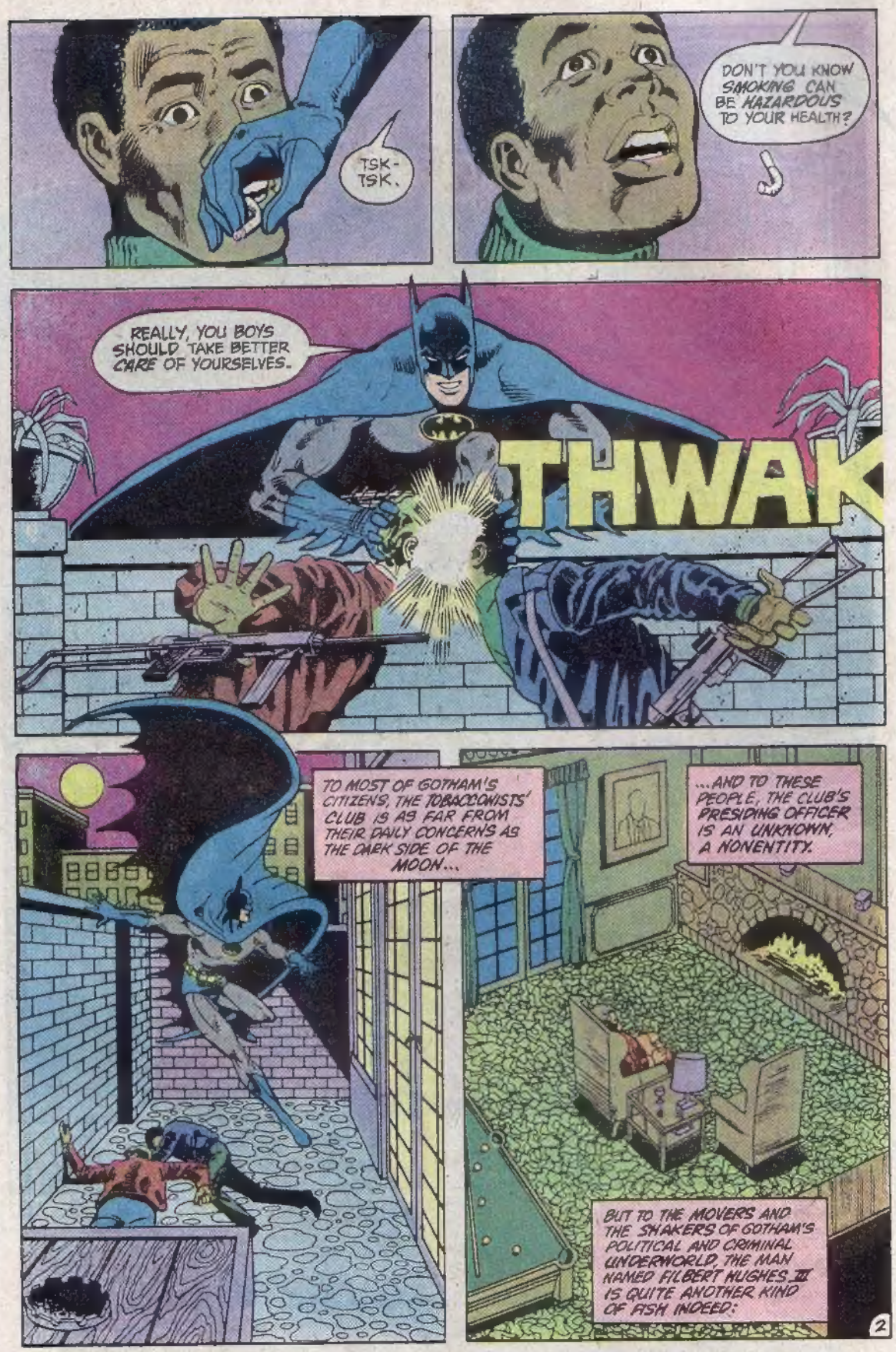
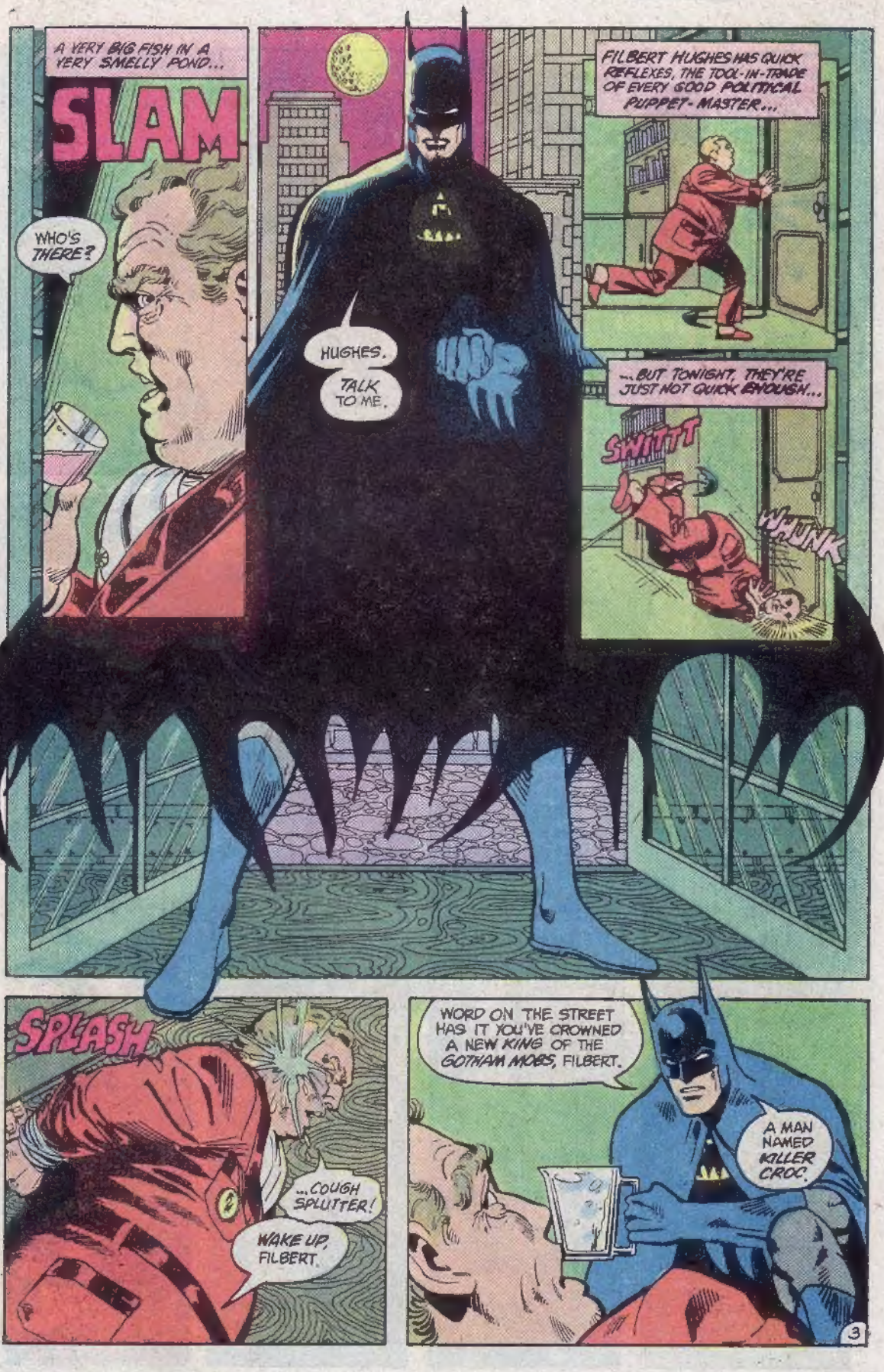

TSK-TSK.
DON'T YOU KNOW SMOKING CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH?
REALLY, YOU BOYS SHOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELVES.
THWAK
TO MOST OF GOTHAM'S CITIZENS, THE TOBACCONISTS' CLUB IS AS FAR FROM THEIR DAILY CONCERNS AS THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON...
...AND TO THESE PEOPLE, THE CLUB'S PRESIDING OFFICER IS AN UNKNOWN, A NONENTITY.
BUT TO THE MOVERS AND THE SHAKERS OF GOTHAM'S POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD, THE MAN NAMED FILBERT HUGHES III IS QUITE ANOTHER KIND OF FISH INDEED:


A VERY BIG FISH IN A VERY SMELLY POND...
SLAM
WHO'S THERE?
HUGHES. TALK TO ME.
FILBERT HUGHES HAS QUICK REFLEXES, THE TOOL-IN-TRADE OF EVERY GOOD POLITICAL PUPPET-MASTER...
...BUT TONIGHT, THEY'RE JUST NOT QUICK ENOUGH...
SWITTT
WHUNK
SPLASH
...COUGH SPLUTTER!
WAKE UP, FILBERT.
WORD ON THE STREET HAS IT YOU'VE CROWNED A NEW KING OF THE GOTHAM MOBS, FILBERT.
A MAN NAMED KILLER CROC.

CROC ASSASSINATED A SPY-TURNED-CROOK NAMED THE SQUID!
TRUTH TO TELL, I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT, FILBERT.
THE SQUID WAS SCUM, AND MAYBE HE DESERVED TO DIE.
BUT NOT IN MY TOWN.
I WANT KILLER CROC, FILBERT.
GIVE HIM TO ME.
SIX HOURS AGO, THE CALL WENT OUT TO THE LEADERS OF GOTHAM CITY'S LOCAL GANGS!
"MEETING TONIGHT, AT THE REPTILE HOUSE OF THE GOTHAM CITY ZOO.
Reptile Ho
"BE THERE."
THEY'RE CURIOUS, THESE LITTLE LORDS OF CRIME; THERE'VE BEEN RUMORS ON THE STREET, RUMORS ABOUT A MAN NOBODY WANTS TO NAME.
THEY'VE COME TO FIND OUT IF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE.
CLICK!
4
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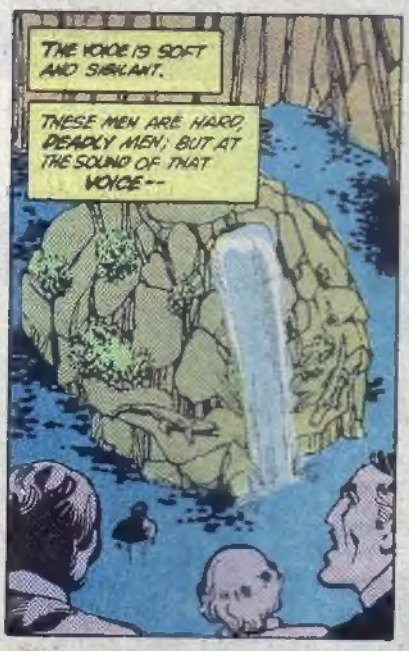
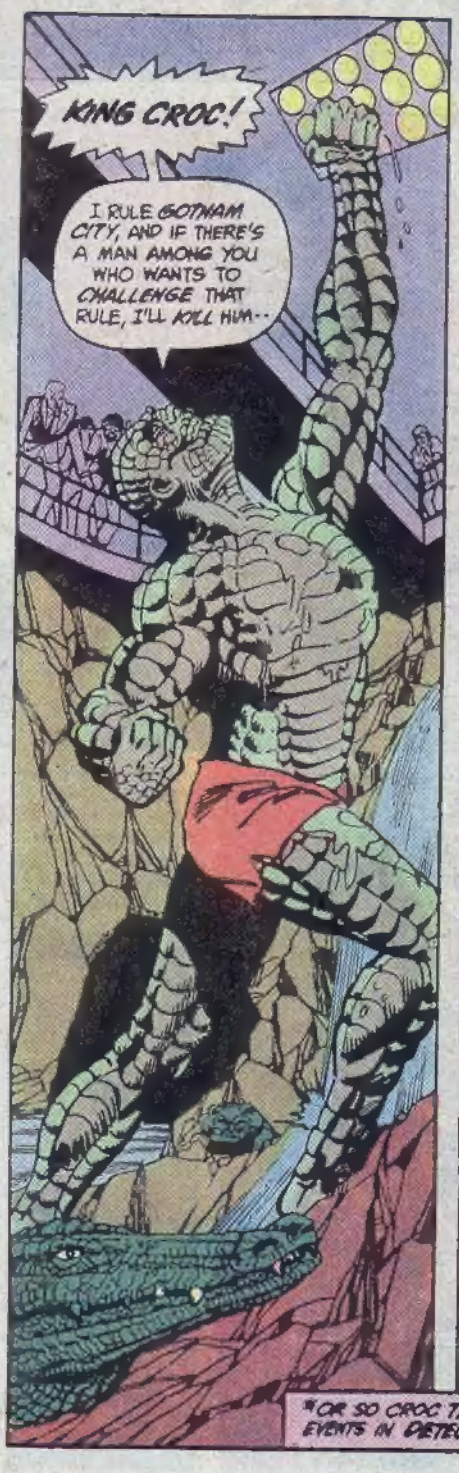




--THE WAY I KILLED THE BATMAN!
THAT'S RIGHT. THE BATMAN IS DEAD. I WATCHED HIM DROWN IN THE GOTHAM SEWER LAST NIGHT.* HE'S DEAD-- BECAUSE HE DARED DEFY KING CROC!

--THERE ISN'T ONE AMONG THEM WHO DOES NOT FEEL A CHILL OF FEAR.
NO ONE LEAVES UNTIL I SAY SO.
FROM NOW ON, I CALL THE SHOTS, I GIVE THE ORDERS.
SOME OF YOU KNOW ME. FOR THE REST OF YOU, MY NAME IS CROC.

*OR SO CROC THINKS, FROM THE EVENTS IN DETECTIVE #525 -- LEN.

THE BATMAN, HUH? EVEN IF THAT'S TRUE -- AN' I AIN'T SAYIN' IT ISN'T -- YOU'VE GOT ONE PROBLEM, "KING."
GOTHAM'S ALREADY GOT A BOSSMAN... HIS NAME'S FALCO.

FALCO IS A FOOL AND A FAILURE. HE LET THE BATMAN IMPRISON HIM, AND NOW TRIES TO RULE FROM A JAIL CELL.
I WILL DEAL WITH TONY FALCO.

YEAH? WELL WHEN YOU DO, GIVE US A CALL.
A GANG CAN'T HAVE TWO TOP MEN. AM I RIGHT?
PUT THAT GUN AWAY, JUNIOR, BEFORE I BREAK IT OFF AND SHOVE IT DOWN YOUR TONSILS.

THEY MOCKED ME.
MEN WILL SUFFER FOR THIS, SLICK--
--BEGINNING WITH TONY FALCO.
YEAH...UH... RIGHT, BOSS.
SOMETHING I WANTED TO ASK YOU...

...THAT PROTECTION SCAM WE WERE RUNNING ON THE SLOAN CIRCUS, BACK WHEN WE WORKED FOR THE SQUID.
YOU WANT I SHOULD DROP IT?

NO.
GO BACK TO MR. SLOAN, SLICK.
REMIND HIM HE OWES ME PAYMENT ON HIS INSURANCE.

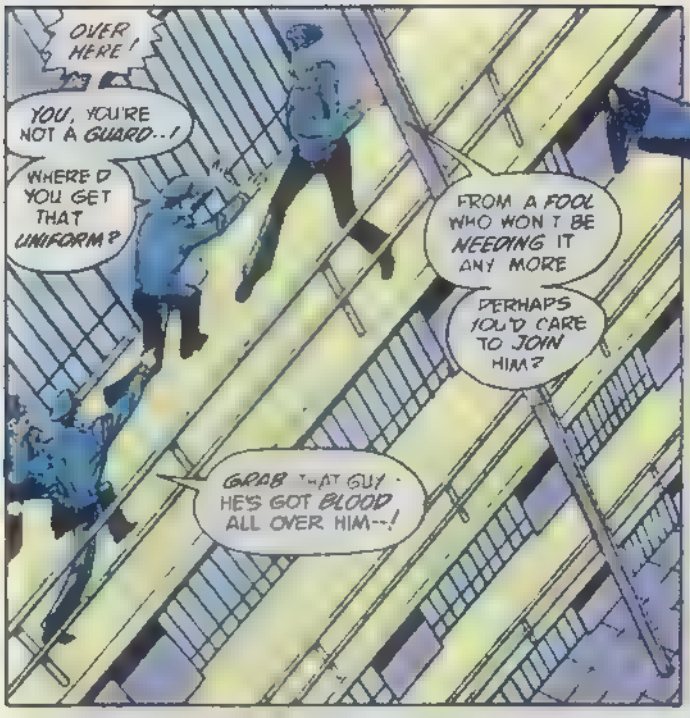
RIGHT. ON MY WAY.
THE GUY'S CRAZY. PLAIN CRAZY.
6

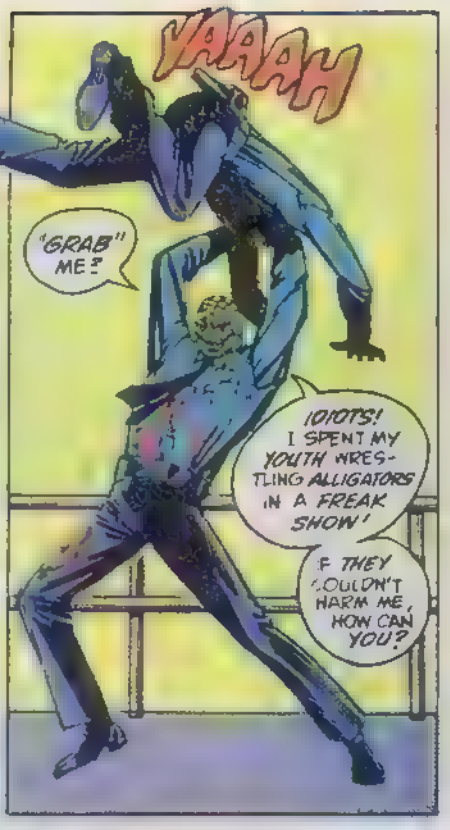
JAMES GORDON IS A LIGHT SLEEPER; HAS BEEN, SINCE HIS WIFE DIED.
HE CALLS IT AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD.
TAP TAP TAP TAP
AFTER ALL, HE'S COMMISSIONER OF POLICE...
CAN ONLY BE ONE THING--
SOMEONE--AT MY WINDOW--?
...AND POLICE COMMISSIONERS KEEP VERY ODD HOURS INDEED.
HUGHES WOULDN'T TELL ME A THING, SO I'M BACK TO WHERE I STARTED--
--WITHOUT A CLUE HOW TO FIND CROC, NO HINT OF WHAT HE PLANS!
THE HELL OF IT IS, I HAD CROC IN MY REACH, AND I LET HIM ESCAPE--*
--A LATE NIGHT GIFT FROM THE BATMAN!
--AND I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY!
*SEE DET. #525. -- L.

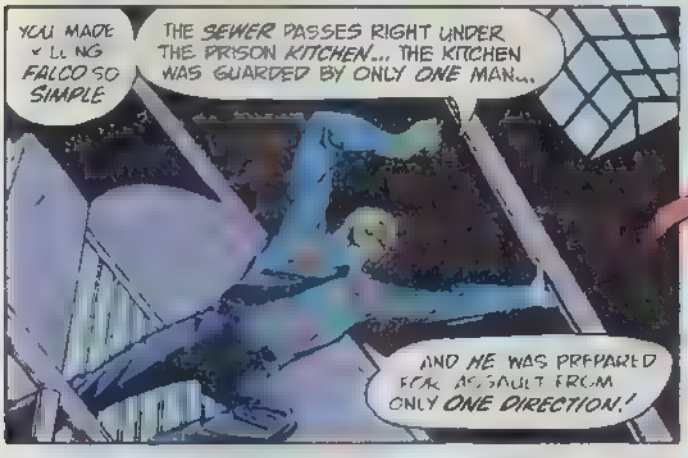
GOTHAM CITY JAIL, 1:00 AM:
POST ONE REPORTING IN. ALL QUIET.
SO WHAT'S NEW?
EVER SINCE THEY OPENED THIS NEW BUILDING, WE HAVEN'T HAD A SINGLE BREAKOUT...
...AND IF YOU ASK ME, PAL, WE NEVER WILL.
FOOLS.
YOU GUARD AGAINST A BREAK-OUT...
...BUT YOU DO NOTHING TO PROTECT YOURSELVES FROM A BREAK-IN!
CRACK
SAY, DID YOU HEAR--?
JUST A TREE CREAKIN' IN THE WIND, SAMMY.
RELAX. THIS IS PURE JERK DUTY...
8

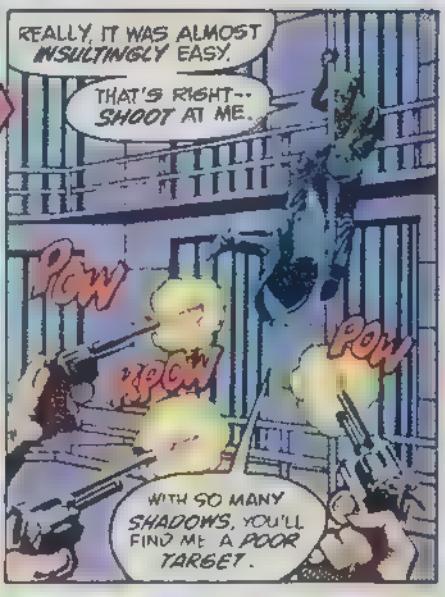
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

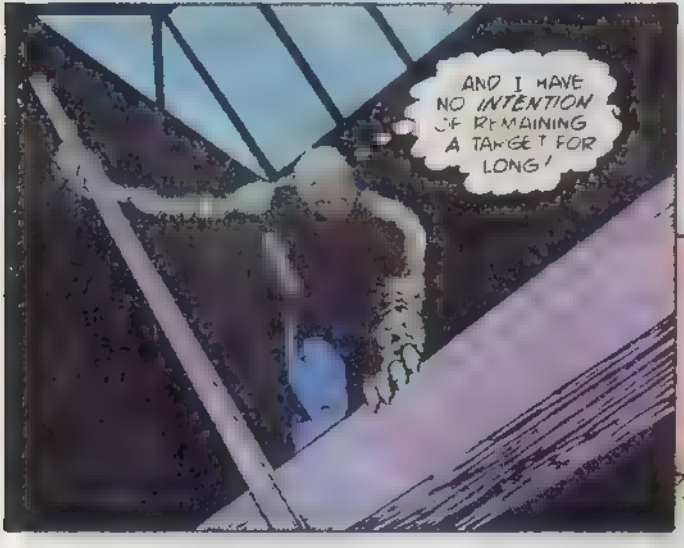
FALCO. WAKE UP, FALCO.
YOU'VE GOT A VISITOR.
CLICK!
WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT, A VISITOR?
YOU GUYS NEVER LET NOBODY IN BEFORE--
NOOOOOOOOOOOO
--CAME FROM FALCO'S CELL, SOUNDED LIKE HE WAS HAVIN' A HEART ATTACK!
ANYBODY BUT TONY FALCO, I'D SAY HE WAS HAVING NIGHTMARES.
BUT THAT GUY'S SUCH AN ICE-BLOCK, HE NEVER-- HUH?
CRIPES! WHERE'D ALL THAT BLOOD CAME FROM--?
CHOKE!!
GOOD LORD!
9

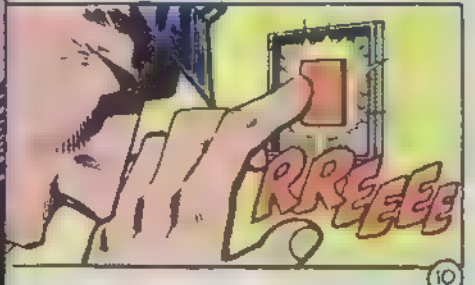

OVER HERE!
YOU, YOU'RE NOT A GUARD--!
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT UNIFORM?
FROM A FOOL WHO WON'T BE NEEDING IT ANY MORE
PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO JOIN HIM?
GRAB THAT GUY - HE'S GOT BLOOD ALL OVER HIM--!

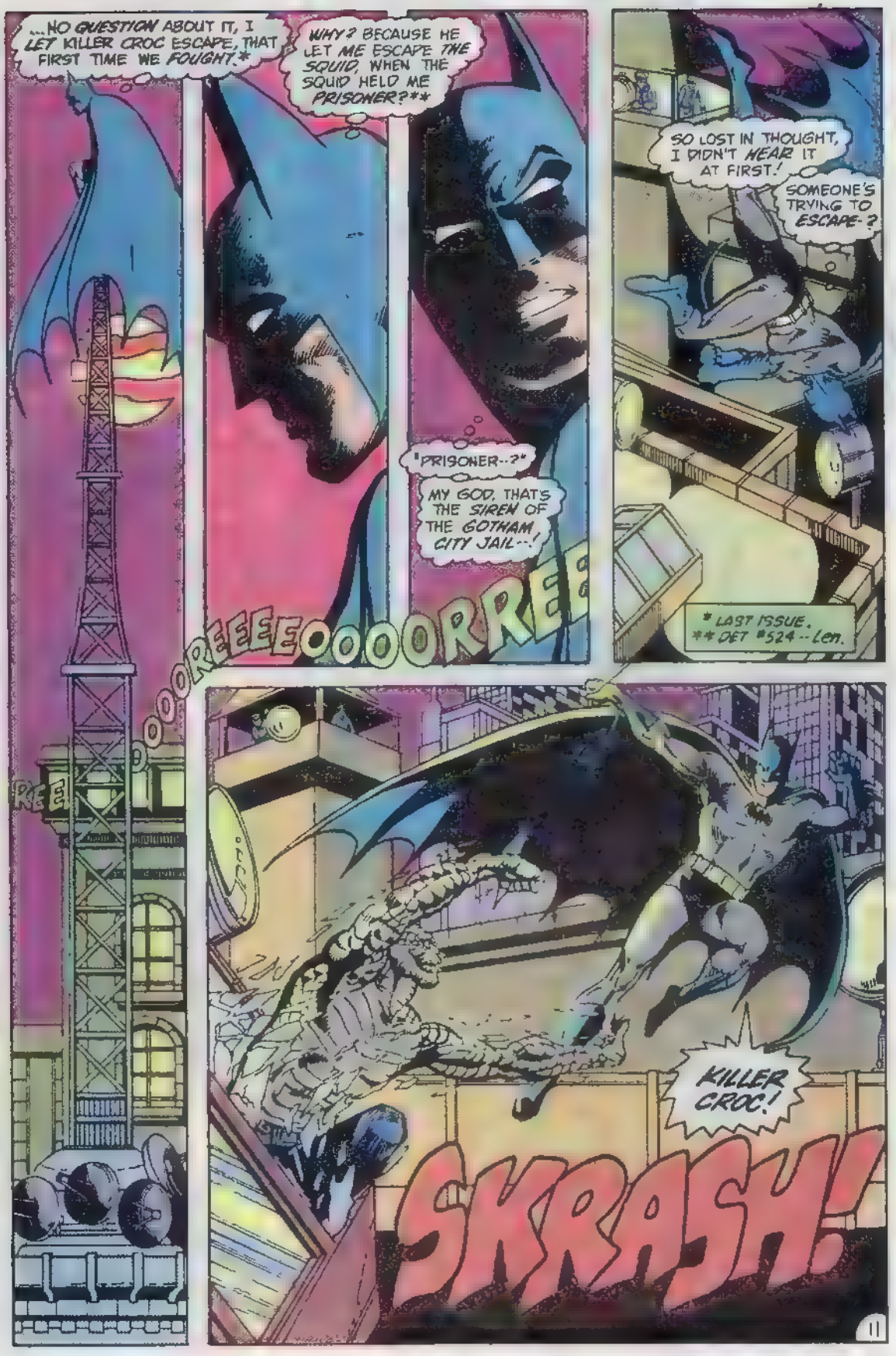

YAAAH
"GRAB" ME?
IDIOTS! I SPENT MY YOUTH WRESTLING ALLIGATORS IN A FREAK SHOW!
IF THEY COULDN'T HARM ME, HOW CAN YOU?

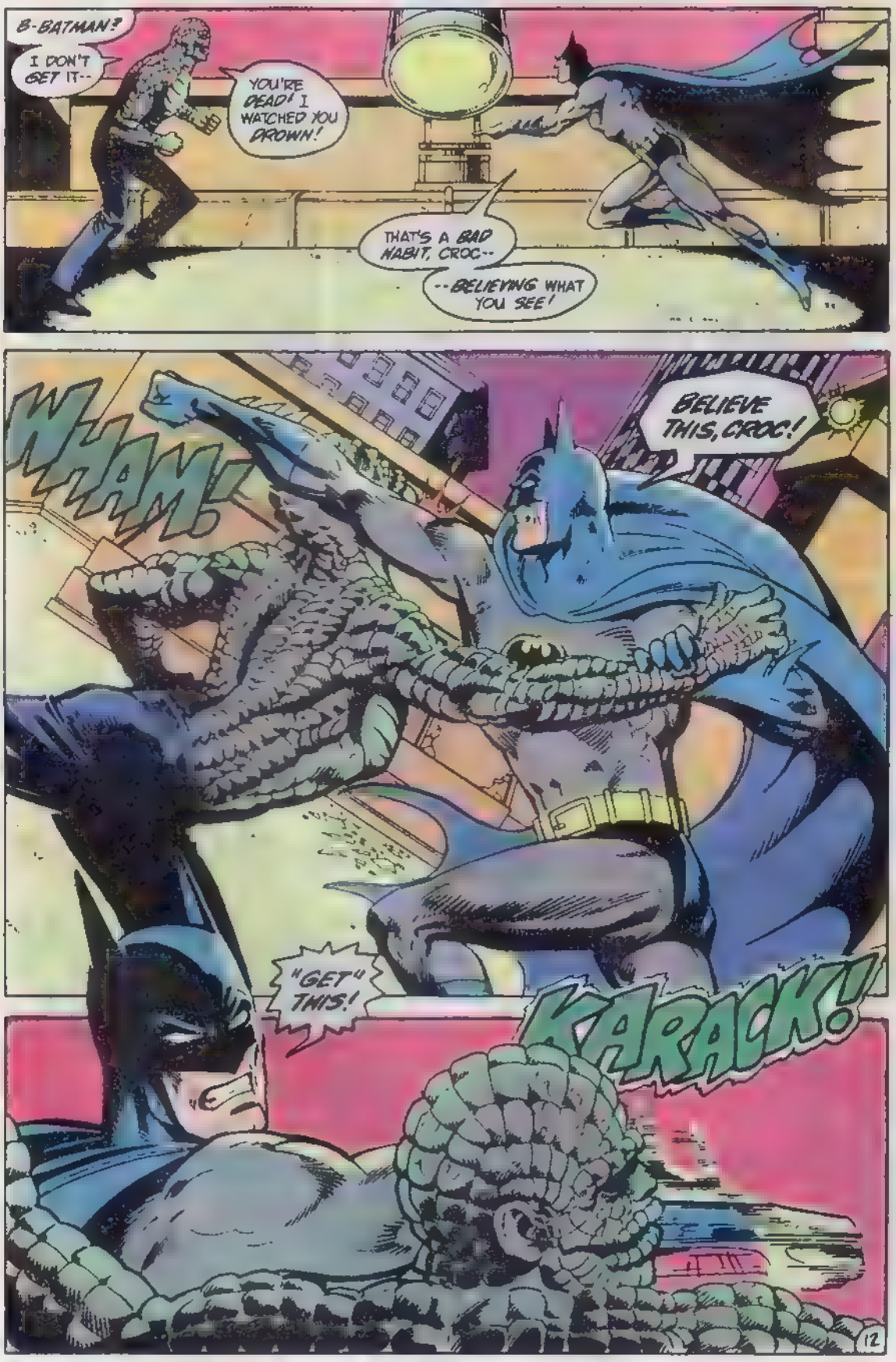

YOU MADE WRESTLING FALCO SO SIMPLE
THE SEWER PASSES RIGHT UNDER THE PRISON KITCHEN... THE KITCHEN WAS GUARDED BY ONLY ONE MAN...
AND ME WAS PREPARED FOR ASSAULT FROM ONLY ONE DIRECTION!


REALLY, IT WAS ALMOST INSULTINGLY EASY.
THAT'S RIGHT-- SHOOT AT ME.
POW
POW
POW
WITH SO MANY SHADOWS, YOU'LL FIND ME A POOR TARGET.


AND I HAVE NO INTENTION OF REMAINING A TARGET FOR LONG!


RRREEEE


...NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, I LET KILLER CROC ESCAPE, THAT FIRST TIME WE FOUGHT.*
WHY? BECAUSE HE LET ME ESCAPE THE SQUID, WHEN THE SQUID HELD ME PRISONER?**
"PRISONER--?"
MY GOD, THAT'S THE SIREN OF THE GOTHAM CITY JAIL--!
OOOREEEEOOOORREE
SO LOST IN THOUGHT, I DIDN'T HEAR IT AT FIRST!
SOMEONE'S TRYING TO ESCAPE-?
* LAST ISSUE.
** DET #524 -- Len.
KILLER CROC!
SKRASH!


B-BATMAN?
I DON'T GET IT--
YOU'RE DEAD! I WATCHED YOU DROWN!
THAT'S A BAD HABIT, CROC--
--BELIEVING WHAT YOU SEE!
WHAM!
BELIEVE THIS, CROC!
"GET" THIS!
KARACK!
12

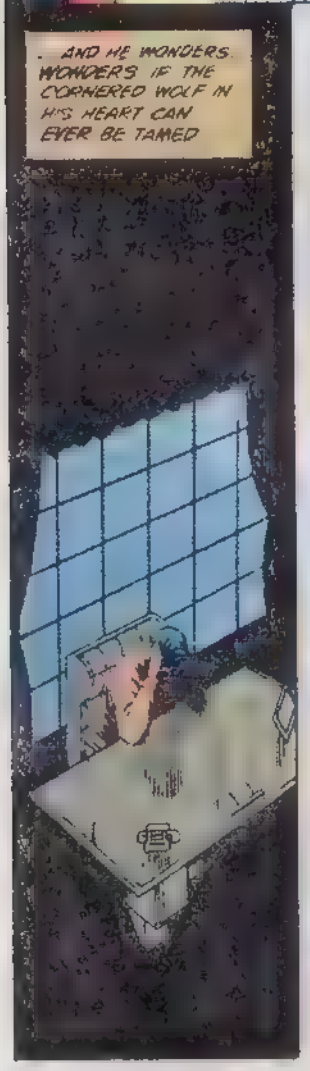
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO DO THAT FOR TWO DAYS NOW
YOU SPOOKED ME, CROC. BUT NOW I'M GOING TO LAY THAT GHOST TO REST.
GET UP
LUCKY PUNCH, CREEP -- THAT'S ALL IT WAS.
YOU CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE.
NOT ANY MORE. I'M READY FOR YOU. I TOLD YOU ONCE, I THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEBODY I COULD RESPECT -- SOMEBODY TOUGH AS ME --
BUT, PAL, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT ANOTHER LOUSY LOSER!
THUNK
WHUMP!
13

THERE'S NO ONE AS GOOD AS ME.
NO ONE!
CRASH!
GEEZ BATMAN.
YOU WANT A DOCTOR?
YOU HURT?
ONLY MY PRIDE.
14

WAYNE MANOR..
WHEW!
BRUCE, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF TAKING A VACATION?
I MEAN, JUST LOOKING AT YOU, I GET SYMPATHY PAINS.
ANOTHER FEW NIGHTS LIKE THIS AND YOU WON'T HAVE ROOM ON YOUR BODY FOR NEW BRUISES
WHEN CRIME TAKES A VACATION, I WILL, DICK
WHAT ABOUT YOUR CIRCUS FRIENDS -- THE TODDS..?
HAVE THEY GOTTEN A LINE ON KILLER CROC THROUGH HIS PROTECTION SCAM?
Y'KNOW, BRUCE, I'VE BEEN THINKING:
WE'RE ASKING THEM TO DO SOMETHING PRETTY DANGEROUS--
SO WHAT?
SCUM LIKE KILLER CROC WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GET A FOOTHOLD IN THIS TOWN IF A FEW MORE PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS TO STOP HIM!
I'M SICK OF "CITIZENS" WHO WANT US TO SHIELD THEM FROM LIFE'S HARD REALITIES
"LET SOMEONE ELSE DO IT... LET THE POLICE HANDLE IT I'M AFRAID ... IT'S DANGEROUS."
IT TURNS MY STOMACH
YOUR FRIENDS MADE A COMMITMENT, RICHARD. THEY'LL FULFILL THEIR COMMITMENT--
--OR TO HELL WITH THEM, AND TO HELL WITH YOU!
MY WORD!
I'M SURE HE DIDN'T MEAN IT, MASTER DICK...

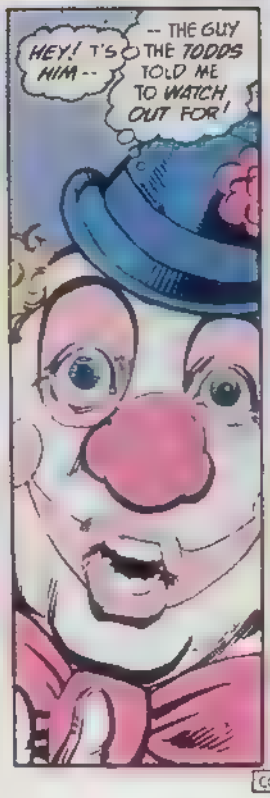
HE MEANT IT, ALFRED
I'LL TELL YOU THE TRUTH--
--LATELY, THAT MAN'S GETTING TO BE A STRANGER.
BRUCE WAYNE'S PRIVATE OFFICE...
DAMN! WHAT'S COME OVER ME?
ATTACKING DICK LIKE THAT-- TAKING MY ANGER AT CROC-- MY FURY WITH MYSELF-- OUT ON MY CLOSEST FRIEND!
I'S JUST... I FEEL SO CROWDED, SO BOXED IN BY EVERYONE AROUND ME!
I FEEL LIKE A CORNERED WOLF!
TOO MANY PEOPLE MAKING DEMANDS ON MY LIFE.
IT STARTED WITH SELINA KYLE-- WHEN SHE CAME BACK AFTER WALKING OUT ON ME, I'D ALREADY BECOME INVOLVED WITH VICKI.
SUDDENLY I HAD TWO LOVERS...
...AND I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LONER...
RRING
PICTURE NEWS MAGAZINE.
VICKY VALE SPEAKING... OH
HELLO, BRUCE
I'M SO PLEASED YOU COULD FIT ME INTO YOUR SCHEDULE.
VICKI! I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE*.
I MADE A FOOL OF MYSELF LAST NIGHT*...
*IN DETECTIVE #525 -- Len.
...ALL THAT NONSENSE ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP BEING SIMPLE BECAUSE YOU MADE NO DEMANDS.
I WAS WRONG.
NO, YOU WEREN'T..
16

. EVERYTHING YOU SAID WAS TRUE
I HAVE KEPT MY EMOTIONAL DISTANCE. I HAVEN'T BEEN THERE WHEN YOU NEEDED ME NEITHER OF US HAS BEEN VERY GIVING



THE SLOAN CIRCUS ON THE CLIFFS, OVER-LOOKING THE NEW JERSEY PALISADES.

AFTER HOURS, THE CIRCUS GROUNDS HAVE A TATTERED GRAVEYARD LOOK...



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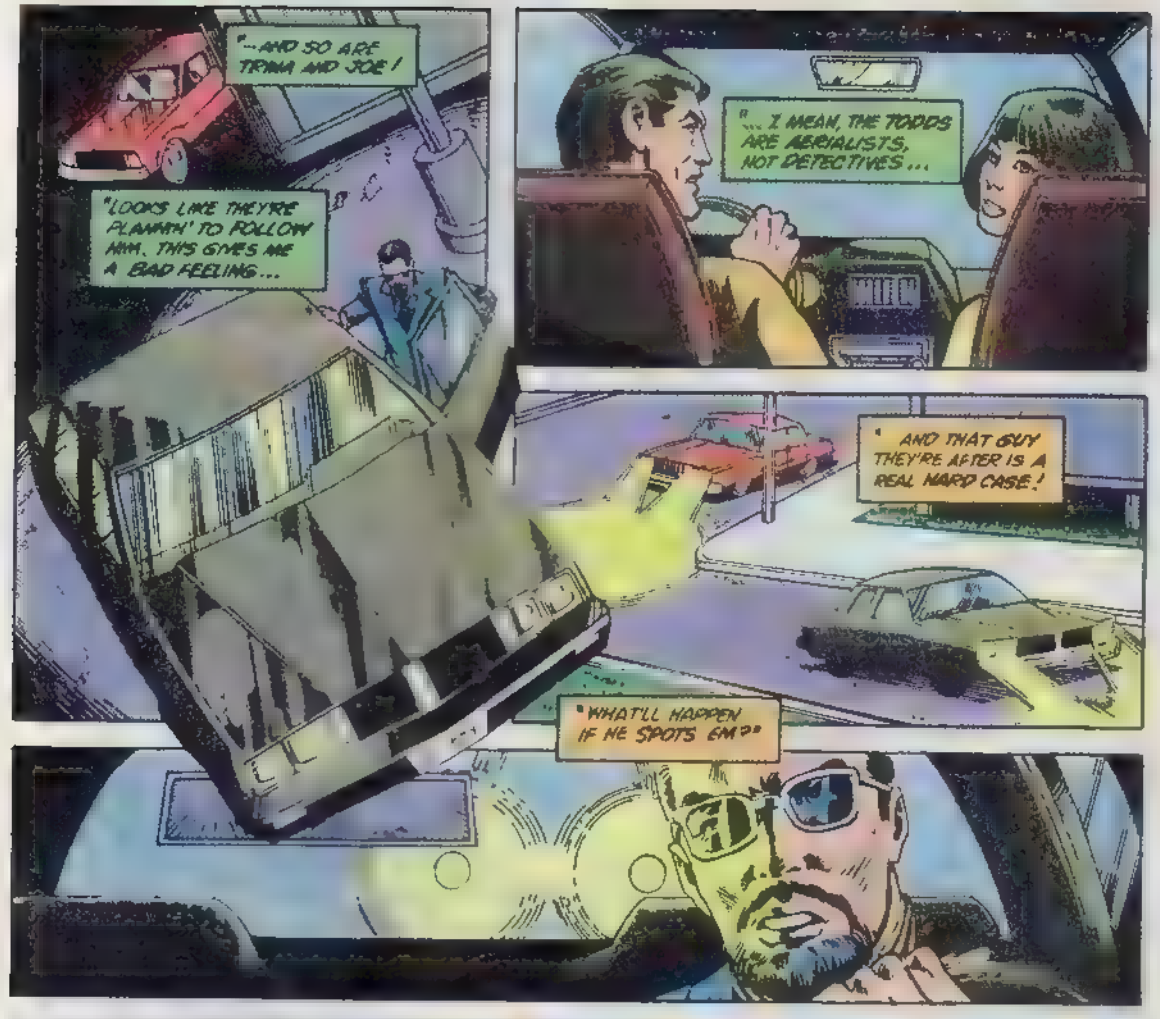
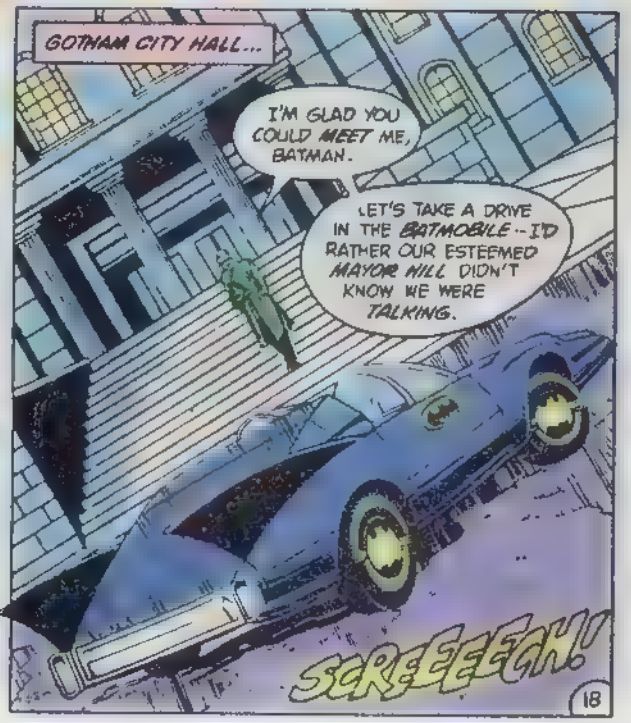
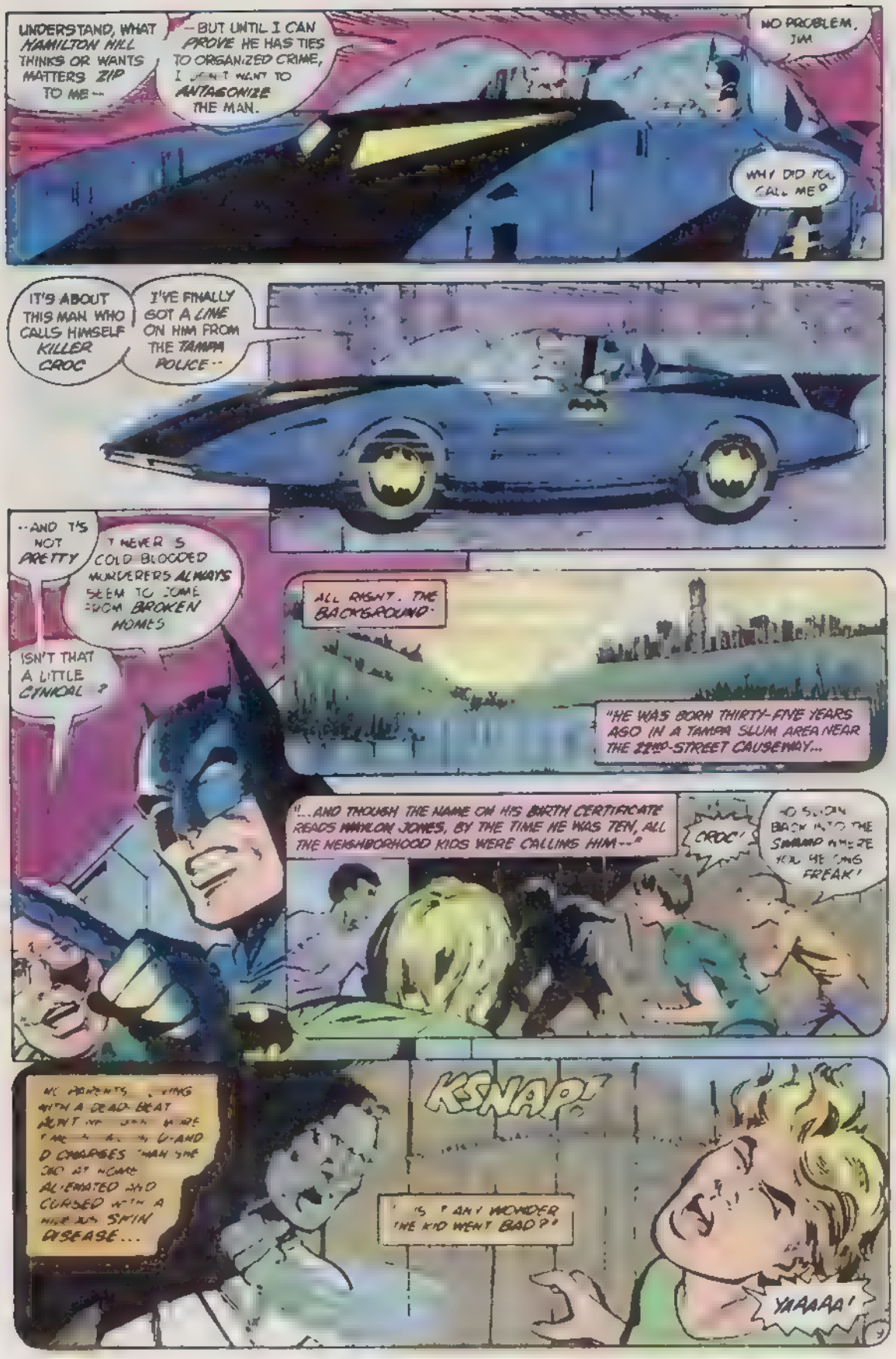

"...AND SO ARE TERRA AND JOE!
"LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE PLANNIN' TO FOLLOW HIM. THIS GIVES ME A BAD FEELING...
"... I MEAN, THE TODDS ARE AERIALISTS, NOT DETECTIVES...
"AND THAT GUY THEY'RE AFTER IS A REAL HARD CASE!
"WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF HE SPOTS 'EM?"

SAY, WALDO, MOM AND DAD HAD SOME-- AH- BUSINESS
"HEY WALL" ME TO STAY WITH YOU AND MELANIE TONIGHT, OKAY?
SURE KIDDO, SURE
JUST LET ME GET THIS NUMBER DOWN.
GOT A FEELIN' IT MIGHT BE REAL IMPORTANT...!

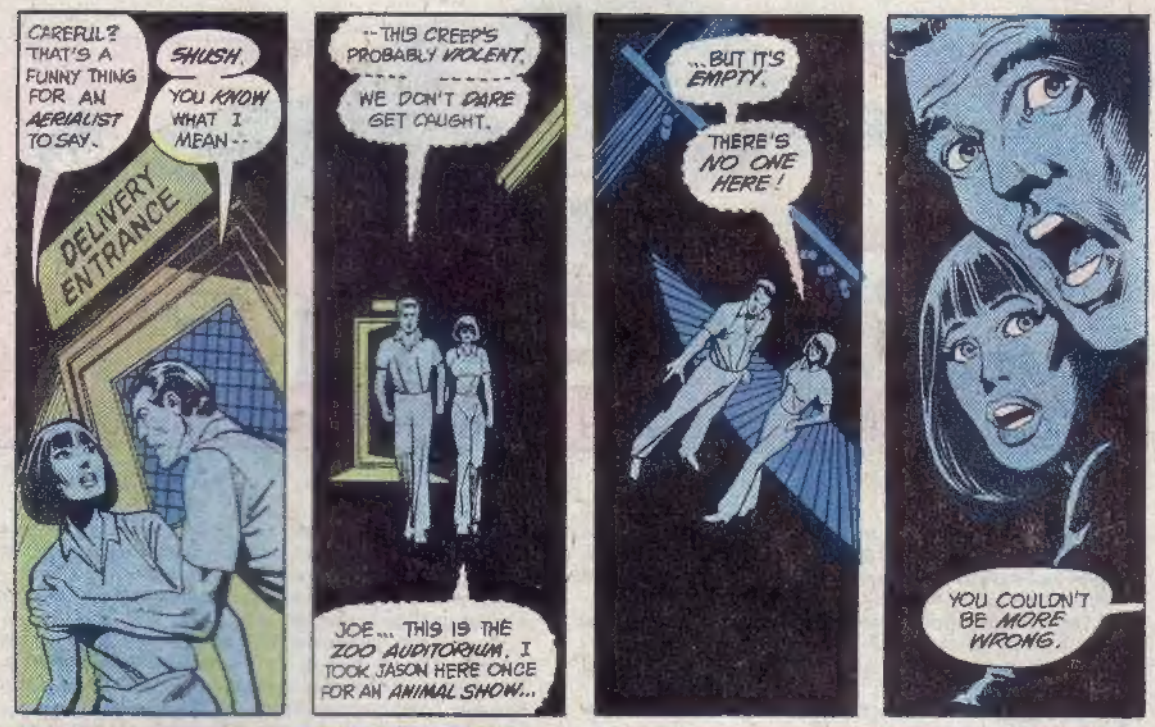

GOTHAM CITY HALL...
I'M GLAD YOU COULD MEET ME, BATMAN.
LET'S TAKE A DRIVE IN THE BATMOBILE--I'D RATHER OUR ESTEEMED MAYOR MILL DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE TALKING.
SCREEEECH!


UNDERSTAND, WHAT HAMILTON HILL THINKS OR WANTS MATTERS ZIP TO ME--
--BUT UNTIL I CAN PROVE HE HAS TIES TO ORGANIZED CRIME, I DON'T WANT TO ANTAGONIZE THE MAN.
NO PROBLEM, JIM
WHY DID YOU CALL ME?
IT'S ABOUT THIS MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF KILLER CROC
I'VE FINALLY GOT A LINE ON HIM FROM THE TAMPA POLICE--
--AND IT'S NOT PRETTY
I NEVER S COLD-BLOODED MURDERERS ALWAYS SEEM TO COME FROM BROKEN HOMES
ISN'T THAT A LITTLE CYNICAL?
ALL RIGHT. THE BACKGROUND.
"HE WAS BORN THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN A TAMPA SLUM AREA NEAR THE 22ND-STREET CAUSEWAY...
"...AND THOUGH THE NAME ON HIS BIRTH CERTIFICATE READS WAYLON JONES, BY THE TIME HE WAS TEN, ALL THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS WERE CALLING HIM--"
CROC!
GO SLITHER BACK INTO THE SWAMP WHERE YOU BELONG FREAK!
KSNAP!
"IS IT ANY WONDER THE KID WENT BAD?"
YAAAA!

"IT WAS BAD. BUT NO ONE CAN SAY HIS ATTACK WAS UNPROVOKED. AND MAYBE HE WOULD HAVE GOTTEN OFF WITH PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION IN A MORE ENLIGHTENED TIME.
"BUT THIS WAS IN THE SOUTH, TWENTY YEARS AGO...
"AND IN THOSE DAYS, THEY HAD DIFFERENT IDEAS ABOUT REHABILITATION.."
SWISH SWISH SWISH
FROM THEN ON, HE WAS IN AND OUT OF JUVENILE HALL --
--AND SINCE THOSE RECORDS ARE SEALED WE CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT HE WENT THROUGH THERE
"HIS FIRST ADULT CRIME CAME WHEN HE WAS SIXTEEN
"HE WAS IN PRISON SERVING A THREE YEAR SENTENCE FOR ROBBERY WHEN SOME NEW FISH MADE A REMARK ABOUT WAYLON'S FACE
"WAYLON KILLED HIM
"...AND IT TOOK SIX GUARDS TO KEEP WAYLON FROM RUNNING BERSERK...
"HE GOT THE DEATH PENALTY..."

"BUT BEFORE THE SENTENCE COULD BE CARRIED OUT THE SUPREME COURT DECLARED THE LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL
"..SO CROC'S SENTENCE WAS COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT..
"..WHICH IN HIS CASE MEANT HE WAS FINALLY PAROLED AFTER EIGHTEEN YEARS BEHIND BARS.
"OUT OF PRISON HE FOUND A JOB IN A CARNIVAL SIDE-SHOW, WRESTLING ALLIGATORS
"THEY BILLED HIM AS KILLER CROC .."
"..AND EIGHT MONTHS AGO, HE LEFT THE CARNIVAL AND DISAPPEARED FROM TAMPA.
TWO MONTHS AGO, THE SHERIFF'S DEPUTY WHO GAVE CROC HIS FIRST BEATING TURNED UP DEAD OF A BROKEN NECK
YOU ALMOST SOUND SORRY FOR JONES, GORDON.
I'VE SPENT MY LIFE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT, BATMAN.
WHEN I STARTED, I HAD NOTHING BUT CONTEMPT FOR CROC'S KIND. I STILL DESPISE THAT SORT OF HUMAN SCUM.
EVEN SO, I KNOW NOTHING'S EVER SO SIMPLE AS WE'D LIKE TO BELIEVE...NOT EVEN EVIL...
..BUT I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR.
VROOM

MEANWHILE: THE SLOAN CIRCUS...
JASON, WALDO-- HOW'S IT GOING?
YOUR FOLKS AROUND, JASE?
TRINA AND JOE JUST TOOK OFF, DICK.
ANY IDEA WHERE THEY WENT?
THEY WERE DOING SOMETHING SECRET FOR ROBIN.
SOMETHING ABOUT A MAN THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW--!
WHAT?
LOOK, WALDO, IF YOU HEAR FROM THEM, CALL ME AT WAYNE MANOR. IMMEDIATELY.
THEY WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW CROC OR HIS FRIENDS!
OH, GOD, I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
MEANWHILE: GOTHAM CITY ZOO...
THIS MUST BE HIS GANG HIDEOUT, TRINA.
WE'D BETTER CALL ROBIN AT THAT SPECIAL NUMBER HE GAVE YOU--!
NO...WE HAVE TO BE SURE!
THEN LET ME GO ON ALONE. I CAN KEEP TO THE SHADOWS...
WE'VE DONE EVERYTHING TOGETHER SINCE WE FIRST MET.
WE'LL DO THIS TOGETHER, OR NOT AT ALL.
I NEVER COULD ARGUE WITH YOU.
ALL RIGHT... BUT WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL...


CAREFUL? THAT'S A FUNNY THING FOR AN AERIALIST TO SAY.
SHUSH.
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN--
DELIVERY ENTRANCE
--THIS CREEP'S PROBABLY VIOLENT.
WE DON'T DARE GET CAUGHT.
JOE... THIS IS THE ZOO AUDITORIUM. I TOOK JASON HERE ONCE FOR AN ANIMAL SHOW...
...BUT IT'S EMPTY.
THERE'S NO ONE HERE!
YOU COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG.

THE LIGHTS!
OH MY GOD...
JOE...
UNINVITED VISITORS.
UNINVITED SPIES.
YOU MUST BE HERE TO LEARN OUR PLANS FOR THE BATMAN.
I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR FACES.
WELL, LET'S NOT KEEP YOU IN SUSPENSE.
WE'LL EVEN DO BETTER THAN TELL YOU WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THAT DAMNED DETECTIVE...
"WE'LL SHOW YOU!"

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE SPECIAL 500th APPEARANCE ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF DETECTIVE #526...

"ALL ENEMIES AGAINST ME!"

Dear Editor,

"Never Scratch a Cat" in BATMAN #365 was a superb conclusion to the current Selina Kyle/Catwoman tale. The story was expertly plotted by Gerry Conway and well rendered by Don Newton.

For an artist who didn't make a good first impression on me, Mr. Newton has now impressed me to the point where I consider him my favorite Bat-artist. Gene Colan runs a close second.

Getting back to the plot of the story, Mr. Conway seems to be concentrating as of late on strong characterization. *Catwoman*'s strong Jealousy of Vicki Vale and Bruce's resentment of *Catwoman* are prime examples. I emphasize Catwoman because Selina Kyle's behavior was the antithesis of what it was in her solo series. In fact, her bitterness was strong enough to temporarily revert her to her old villainous self and drive her to the desire to kill the man she loved.

The most surprising part of the story was the dialog between Catwoman and Batman that occurred during their battle. Catwoman's words clearly indicate that she knows Bruce Wayne is Batman. I always suspected that she put 2 and 2 together during part III of the "Lazarus Affair" when she heard Ras Al Ghul refer to *Batman*'s financial empire. If I had any doubts as to her knowing, they stemmed from BRAVE AND THE BOLD #176 and DETECTIVE #s 508 & 509 in which there were no indications of her possessing the knowledge of Bruce's alter ego. In the future, I would like to know of her reactions to this knowledge, and Batman's reactions to his knowledge of her knowledge. Are you still with me!?

Some other high points of the issue were the dialog between Bruce and Dick and the welcome reinstatement of James Gordon to police commissioner of Gotham. It's good to see that mayor Hill is finally turning over a new leaf by facing the real issues at hand. "Boss" Thorne was fun while he lasted, but I doubt if you could successfully bring him back a third time. With Thorne out of the scene and Hugo Strange lurking in the shadows, I am really looking forward to the surprises you have planned for the future.

Steven Schulz
404 Woodland Drive
Whitewater, WI 53190

So are we, Steven, so are we. Which makes this as good a time as any to let all and sundry know that this will be Gerry Conway's last BATMAN saga for the time being, as the prolific one goes on to THE FURY OF FIRESTORM and even better pursuits here at the New DC. But do not despair, Bat-fans, for next month will witness the debut of a spanking-new writer to these pages and those of DETECTIVE COMICS. His name is **Doug Moench**, *and those of you who've seen his work on Marvel's* **Moon Knight** *and* **Master of Kung Fu** *know you're in for thrills and chills unlike any you've ever experienced before. 'Nuff (in the words of one whose name escapes us at the moment) said.*

* * * * *

Dear Editor,

OK, so what did I expect? First, the Catwoman leaves the Batman, right? Then she comes back to Gotham and finds him pussyfooting around with another woman. She reacts just like any other cat would. She comes up scratching. That's the part of Batman #355 I understand.

What I don't understand is why Vicki Vale over the Catwoman? Let's face it, Vicki is tacky and uninteresting. Given the choice between the two, the Catwoman would win by a mile. Looking at how Newton and Alcala depict her, she is beautiful, alluring and displays enough intrigue to make a good story come together. Conway's offbeat, philosophical script brings two powerful minds onto the threshold of something not even he can comprehend. Even though I was engrossed with the story, the ending was a touch ambiguous. So now what's going to happen? The lady... or the tiger?

Ms. Marina Kowkabany
8587 Church St. #48
Gilroy, Ca. 95020

* * * * *

Dear Editor,

Pure and simple honesty. That's what this letter is about, cause that's what made "Never Scratch a Cat" a keepsake in my collection. At the end, it could've been revealed that Selina was the victim of sleep deprivation, mental illness, drugs, or hypnosis. Leave it to Gerry Conway to provide that final panel with the solution in such beautiful dialogue. Pure and simple honesty.

The Newton-Alcala art was stunning, of course. From that sleek Catillac with its eerie headlights to the battle with the cat and the Catwoman, the mood was entrencing. The splash page was the best, looking like a painting by one of the masters.

I'm anxious to see what will happen to Selina now. Her life as of late has made her a pseudo-heroine-villainess, rather than purely a heroine or simply a villainess, which is just the way I like her!

Neil Ahlquist
Minneapolis, Minn.

* * * * *

Dear Len,

BATMAN #355 was par with all the other Batman stories I have read in the last six months, which means I liked it. After reading the first part of the story in "Detective" I thought Catwoman would be fighting Vicki not the Batman. I don't think Bruce should have to apologize for "starting up with Vicki", after all Selina is the one who walked out. Now that they're back together you can get rid of Vicki, who should never have been brought back in the first place!

When did Selina learn that Bruce Wayne was the Batman?

I thought this issue had a great cover, I always like seeing shadows which reveal the hero's true nature.

Do you write the letters page? If you do, then you must be so lonely in your mail box that you refer to yourself in the 3rd person. But David Lipson shouldn't talk, he isn't any better.

Tell Fluffy I said Hi.

David Lipson
5432 S. Ingleside
Chicago, IL 60615

Yes, David, Len Wein does indeed write this column (as well as those in DETECTIVE and BRAVE & BOLD) and in the schizophrenic third person at that. He's not exactly sure how that ancient and honored tradition began, but he'll be darned if he'll be the one to change it. (Boy, it really is disconcerting to write this way.)

Fluffy says Hi right back at you, and wonders why you haven't called since that torrid night at the Burger King.

* * * * *

And now, since we're trying to cover two issues' worth of mail in one month, and since the inevitable Statement of Ownership box is fast approaching, your comments on BATMAN #356...

Dear Gerry, Don, and Dick,

I was waiting for a comic like this to come around for quite awhile now. BATMAN #356 was definitely one of the 'best looking' Batman tales since Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin handled the character. Don and Dick provided some awesome visuals, and I think that Gerry had a very interesting story. The return of the old Batman foe Hugo Strange was handled well. Gerry's writing had me thoroughly confused for much of the story and that ending with the explosion... interesting. I don't think that Hugo will be seen for the last time with this book though, he'll be back in the Darknight Detective's hair, or cowl in no time at all probably. I do however wonder about the final frame of the book. Batman states that Robin and himself just darted out before the big blast. The Batman has done some amazing things in his day, but getting a block away within a few seconds of a giant explosion?!

He probably thought he was the Flash and Robin Kid Flash, huh? Whatever happened, I won't let that ruin it because it was a nice story. I do hope that Don and Dick stay together for awhile as the art team. Also, do you think you can talk Marshall Rogers into doing some more stories? I would definitely go for that, Marshall brought to us the perfect Batman. Take care and bring in some of those characters as guests and villains in the future, okay?: the Scarecrow, Mr. Freeze, Cat-Man, Bat-Mite, Green Arrow, Batgirl, and Aquagirl. Thanks again!

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324

* * * * *

Dear Len,

Well, it's over. Unfortunately. The Boss Thorne-Hugo Strange story line was one of the best in the Batman's history. The Conway/Colan/Newton version was just as exciting as the Englehart/Rogers line years earlier, perhaps more so because it was longer, more involved, and included both of the major Bat-titles. So, BATMAN #356 was the end of an era, one which will no doubt be revived in a few years, but the conclusion was a let down. I expected a greater battle between Strange and our hero. Sure, Gerry did write a very off-beat story, but after issue #354, whose ending rivaled that of Batman Annual #8 for greatest shocker of ALL time, this was a nothing. I had hoped that the epic conclusion to a months-long novel would at least encompass more than a single issue. The ending was, as I said, a letdown. It is rather obvious that Hugo Strange escaped the graphically illustrated explosion of Wayne Manor, which is good, but the excuse given for Batman and Robin's miraculously surviving the conflagration was rather weak and ridiculous!!

The art was very good, though I prefer Adkins or Alcala's inks on Mr. Newton's pencils. Dick did a very commendable job, it seems he always has a hand in on Batman no matter how many promotions he gets.

Well, that's all you're going to get out of me this month, aren't you glad? Keep up the magnificent work. 'Bye.

Larry Gilbert
15 Center Court
Bethpage, NY 11714

We'll do our best, Larry. And on that note, we take our leave until next month. Be kind to yourselves until then, okay?

ON SALE FEBRUARY 17

THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #198—KARATE KID of THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES is the guest star. The Kid returns to the past to make a special request of his friend Iris Jacobs—and runs smack dab into the middle of a group of terrorists. "Terrorists of the Heart" is the collaboration of Mike W. Barr, writer, and one of DC's newest amazing talent discoveries: penciller Chuck Patton. Cover by Jim Aparo.

THE NIGHT FORCE #10—The frenzy-filled final installment of the shocking second sequence. Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by Gene Colan, inks by Bob Smith. Cover by Gene and Bob.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Paul Levitz, Vice President-Operations